

RAEL UPS THE ANTE | THE IRRESISTIBLE SARAH HARMER

# MACLEAN'S

CANADA'S WEEKLY NEWSMAGAZINE | [www.macleans.ca](http://www.macleans.ca)

APRIL 5 2004

A sculpture of a hand, possibly made of stone or concrete, with a cigarette held between the index and middle fingers. The hand is positioned with the palm facing forward, fingers slightly spread. It rests on a rectangular brick. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light brown. The title 'the rude age' is overlaid in large red letters across the middle of the image.

## the rude age

THERE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN JERKS. BUT IN A TIME OF Jangling CELLPHONES AND DEMON DRIVERS, LOUISH MPS AND HOWARD STERN, THERE ARE JUST MORE OF THEM.

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## POLS BASHING POLS

If anything unites the right and the left, it's the uncivil way they treat each other

A COUPLE of weeks ago, Republican Senator John McCain, arguably the most interesting figure in American politics, was asked about attacks being run by his party against the Democrats' John Kerry. "The ads describe Kerry as 'being on offence'" in a way that suggests he would pose a threat to security if elected. No, McCain said, "I do not believe that he is, quite, weak on defence." He described Kerry, who, like McCain, is a decorated

Vietnam warrior, as a friend, and denounced the fact that in Washington these days, "so patently you can't be friends any more with somebody who is of a different party."

McCain sums up one of the big things wrong with politics today in North America. If there's one thing that unites the right and left on both sides of the border, it's the hatred, baring homophobia and white trash, approaching lifelessness and such a vicious particular. If you're a George W. Bush Republican, you know that your opponents are all geeks, socialists, unpatriotic vermin who, aside froming that anything else, get to bed at night dreaming of ways to grow new powers in the United Nations. And if you're a Democrat, you understand that all Bushies are war-criminal religious fanatics for ever seeking new ways to subvert the democratic process and crush themselves even to the President himself as to cancel the fact his IQ doesn't extend past the double digit. And so on.

If Canadian federal politics had seemed about this kind of verbal warfare, it's been so by circumstance rather than any greater ability. Given the absence of serious opposition since 1993, the Liberals haven't been ordered to sling the other parties—and, for the most part, as one paid attention to what the other parties said about them, but in the wake of the sponsorship scandal revelations, we've come to understand that the real reason the Liberals haven't crashed the opposition is that they were saving their venom for each other. Since Paul Martin came to power, the party has, among other things, welcomed one Bloc Québécois and three Conservative MPs to caucus even as they've aggressively chased out Liberals who were the master of being too loyal to their previous leader.

**"You know things are bad for the Liberals when Frank McKenna decides not to run in the next election"**

indicating and asserting over the Liberals' survival might had others tell you know things are bad when Frank McKenna, the best bet to eventually succeed Martin had he run in this election, decides not to do so.

In the past, an elected Liberal looking for a graceful exit from the House of Commons could always expect some sort of government-aided appointment. But the rules are about to change to make government appointments a far more rigorous, less partisan process—so that the reach experience around elected politics is about to be a detriment in those circumstances, rather than an advantage. This is what Liberal politics has come to in the year 2004: the only thing more disgraceful than being friendly with people in another party is to have hung around with the wrong people in your own. No wonder nobody's smiling.

*Anthony Wilson-Smith*

antonw@canwest.ca is e-mail to The Editor's Letter

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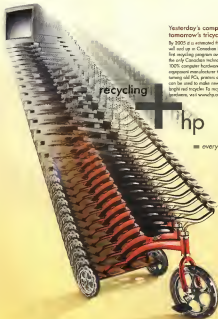
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'While Bertuzzi gets blamed, coaches, owners, the league and the fans go uncashed by this issue of accepted, no, encouraged, violence' — *Danforth LeBlanc, Vancouver, B.C.*

#### Combat zone

Roads to Montreal for calling a strong stand against hockey violence in a country that largely seems indifferent to it ("No end in sight," *Cover*, March 22). It boggles my mind that in a nation so proud of its peace-keeping role around the world, our nation of sports should tolerate, and even encourage, such mindless, sickening acts of violence on a regular basis. No wonder I stopped watching hockey in favour of soccer years ago. *Ron Stewart, Vancouver*

I say if you don't like fighting in hockey, watch something else—like cricket or sailing. *Daniel Black, Ottawa*

I was about to get my rights in a letter after I learned that hockey violence rated seven pages of coverage while the *Midwest* bombings—vastly more deadly—received only two. But, after reading both articles, I decided that hockey may indeed be the best sport in which to learn courage and restraint for violence. We all have to start at home, with ourselves. *Jay Berr, Hamilton*

Upon departure for an out-of-town hockey tournament with my 11-year-old son the week following the *Bertuzzi* hit, I was confident that he would not cross the path of any mini-Bertuzzis, especially since it was a non-contact tournament. I was stunned as I watched him get shoved across the head from behind as he was making a rush to the net. He immediately went down and needed to be assisted off the ice. After the game, while passing the opponent's changing room, I overheard the coach tell his players that they were not aggressive enough and that he wanted to see more violence. When coaches and/or parents drift this accidental mentality into the minds of our young hockey players, future Bertuzzis are inevitable. *Richard DeCicco, Ottawa*

Why would one call for a ban on fighting in hockey after seeing Todd Bertuzzi's attack?



This was in no way a fight. Steve Moore was unable to fight back once he was attacked from behind. A true fight does have a place in the game. When a team is down, a good fight can give a team motivated enough to get that tying goal. And, if nothing else, it can turn a slow, low-scoring game into something more exciting and fast-paced. Why give the whole team permission for a couple of people throwing punches? *David Biddle, Ottawa*

You wrote: "When [Ace Bailey] did eventually recover, he was unable to play again and his career in hockey was limited to working as an assistant penalty timekeeper at Maple Leaf Gardens." Wrong. While Bailey

#### Final word The problem is with the people, not the movie

Our media continues to overlive with stories of *The Passion of the Christ* after Brian D. Johnson explained the film is grossly bloody violent. After making similar claims in recent issues, *They Owe Us at Kinowest*, Del., writes: "the controversy reinforces my view that, if religious and their pre-sets were to relax equal, they themselves would be the victims."

did not play again, he was head coach of the University of Toronto senior hockey team (the *Varsity Blues*) for 10 years. His team won three senior Intercollegiate Hockey League championships, and, in 1939-1940, he coached the Blues to the championship in the International Intercollegiate Ice Hockey League. A few years ago, some of his players recognized Bailey's contribution to their hockey career by creating the *Ace Bailey Award*, presented annually to the *Varsity Blues* team captain.

*Paul Gerson, Faculty of Physical Education and Health, University of Toronto*

#### Passport to nowhere

Like Adam Khan, I travel overseas for business. Unlike him, however, I have not found a decrease in the "weight" of the Canadian passport ("Getting a cold shoulder," *Trend*, March 22). Regrettably, Mr. Khan does allude to the real cause of the reported restrictions and roadblocks when travelling with his Canadian passport—his ethnicity. He is right to question whether technological advances in surveillance and documentation can outweigh human behavior such as bigotry and prejudice. Surely only the fully naive believe profiling began post-9/11. Still, Canada now has the opportunity to regain its place as the world's pre-eminent middle power, to reaffirm its respected values of inclusivity, multiculturalism and diversity of ideas—a call to action it cannot ignore if it wishes to be any hope whatsoever for both the symbolic and political value of our passports. *Stacy Kelly, Kingston, Ont.*

Why should Canadian passports be any different from those of any other country? Canada has housed terrorists, so why shouldn't countries take the same precautions with us as they do with others? We are no better than anybody else, so for every body's protection, including Mr. Khan's, everyone should be checked carefully before entering another country. If we have nothing to hide, one should be happy such measures are taken. *Eda Saracik, Ottawa*

#### Enduring pioneers

John Ralston Saul's "Two forgotten pioneers" (March 15) is probably the single best essay I have read in the past 30 years of *Maclean's*. It captures the uniqueness of



the Canadian experiment and the growing, uneasy quality of Canadian society that is a step from the increasingly violent, uncertain conditions of most of the world. Boldwin and LaFontaine were genuinely great leaders—among the very greatest in terms of their achievements on behalf of their fellow Canadians. It's essential that we be reminded, every so often, of just how far ahead of their times they not only were, but—in view of the state of political society in the rest of the planet—still are.

Robert Lemley, Columbus, Ohio

#### A better-than-fine balance

The happiest mothers—and children—know are those who work just one hour but are able to be primary caregivers for their children ("Kids on camera," *Conex*, March 15). Last time this happened as a gender issue, I need to add that I know a number of families that are equally satisfied with the idea being the primary caregiver doing occasional work and the mother working full time. The rarely mentioned part of the picture, of "If you stay at home, you're a nothing."

Steven Pihl, Victoria, Ont.

Only the individual can decide if the benefits of personally running a family outweigh the benefits of paid employment, or vice versa. Why is the individual then made to feel guilty about this decision by society, by friends and relatives, and by the media?

Glen Warren, Ontario, Ont.

It's great that families with the financial means are making the decision to put their kids first, but the women disadvantaged in this story obviously have the money and power to do what they want. The lower-to-middle-income "mom" families where the real struggle and sacrifice lies

Kate Workman, Edmonton

Years ago, my husband had a massive stroke and died suddenly, leaving me with no money and two children to raise. I made up a job, but it was no real job. During that time I was on a back list when I overheard a young woman in her mid-30s saying how she had left her children at home with a sister so she could come to her mother. All of a sudden, she said she could

“Gennie, I don't have a job, but I have the experience—and I have to go on welfare so you can't fool 'half-bred'”



Reaping the benefits of personally raising a family outweigh the benefits of paid employment.

live “half-bred.” She had a husband who was excellent, well-paying job. It wasn't his that needed the money. I stood behind her thinking, “Gennie, I don't have a job, and here you are taking up space that I could be filling. I have the experience, I have the knowledge, and I have to go on welfare so you can't fool ‘half-bred.’”

Kelly Sommerhays, Burnaby, B.C.

#### The pension myth

Mary Jorjaghi's statement in “Remedy for a fallacy” (March 15) that “even the poorest seniors now receive adequate pensions” perpetuates a deeply held Canadian myth. In actuality, many I would reckon that the CTP provides a useful income only if one qualifies for the full amount by being aged or an extended working career in Canada at the maximum qualifying income rate. As for the “universal” Old Age Security, one needs to have lived here for 40 years to qualify for the full amount. There is a clear gap between these two programs and reveals who have (acquired their skills, education experience and work ethic) are regarded as inside society of OAS then best. Care does who have, say, spent their adult lives in jail.

Patrick McLean, Parksville, B.C.

#### Worth, right?

What should be asked of Paul Martin? “Really, what difference does

make what is central of the male billion-dollar investment?” (Quoting Paul Martin, “Politics,” March 15) “He's all in power and can make policy that benefits his business interests. Can he not? Or are we to believe that those in trust of the property will do the opposite of what would otherwise benefit his investors whenever he produces industry policy so as to not let us, as appear to be in, conflict of interest?”

Frank Storie, St. John's, Nfld.

#### Weak defence

Thanks for the article “The ditch vs. feeding” (Australia, March 1). As an Australian resident in Toronto, we often enjoy noting the similarities, as well as the differences, between our two lovely countries. Even our prison, however, is not of David Milne's alleged “defence” of Australia's participation in the invasion of Iraq. Especially as that defence was based on Australia's moral duty to the threat before it made it over our shores. The article seemed at the midpoint of Australia's meeting to please its personal “two sides.” But to many Australians, becoming a subscriber to history George W. Bush and Tony Blair's dishonest war is beyond the pale. It is hard to meet anyone down here who supports Australia's involvement in Iraq, so I can't imagine such a diminished defence as Milne's defending the decision. I wonder if it was one of an explanation that a defence?

Sharon O'Neill, Melbourne, Australia



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## THE UNDERCOVER UNDERGRADS

Call them undercover undergrads or scholarly spies: they are our network of students across the country who served as sources for the Maclean's Guide to Canadian Universities 2004.

Their inside scoop on what's hot and what's not in the Campus Confidential feature of the 364-page guide offers up-to-the-minute insights. "We spent months talking to hundreds of current



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undergrads to get their candid opinions about what's working—and what isn't—on their campuses," says Ann Bennett Johnston, editor of the guide. She's pictured (above right) beside George Calineo, a veteran hat dog vendor singled out by students at Toronto's Ryerson University as a local hero. Why? Each year, Calineo donates an entire day's revenue to fund bursaries for Ryerson students.

The guide tells you the good stuff: the most popular programs and professors, the best hangouts and can't-miss social events. But it also reveals problems that may influence your choice of university, from shabby residences and transit problems to library shortages and classrooms crowding.

"Prospective students and their parents are looking for a strong sense of community and support, in class and beyond," says Bennett Johnston. "The guide's strength is that it offers the straight goods—not just about academic options, but about the entire spectrum of campus life. Ultimately, it's about helping students find the right fit."

Look for the Maclean's Guide to Canadian Universities 2004 as reported.

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## WORLD

**AFGHANISTAN** In some of the worst factional fighting since the ouster of the Taliban, the Afghan minister for civil aviation was killed, reportedly while trying to arrange an assassination plot against his father, General Khar, one of the country's powerful warlords. Citing the ongoing violence, President Hamid Karzai told the U.S. and Britain he wants to delay elections being planned for June.

Meanwhile, more than 50 suspected al Qaeda and Taliban fighters were killed and more than 150 wounded in a nearly two week offensive just across the border in Pakistan. However, it seems that Osama bin Laden's right hand man, Ayman al-Zawahiri, escaped the bombardment. His voice later was heard on a tape urging Pakistanis to overthrow their government.

**TRIALS** As Spain held a memorial service for the 196 victims of the Madrid train bombings, French officials started up a half-hearted brawl on the line between Paris and Basel, Switzerland. It was believed to be the work of an extremist group called AQIS, which had been forecasting a bombing campaign while demanding a ransom. Spanish authorities, meanwhile, arrested 13 people, and the probe widened to Germany.

**GADDAFI** Profiling himself "suspended" to be greeting a former panth, a staff-appropriated King Blue threw a circumspectively hours with Libyan strongman Muammar Gaddafi in a new, outside Tripoli. The British PM congratulated Gaddafi on also signing his flagging nuclear program and offered his help in the war on terrorism.



**AMERICAN JUSTICE** Religious went on trial again in the U.S. as accused atheist Dr. Michael Newdow, a medical doctor and non-practicing lawyer, asked the U.S. Supreme Court to reinvent the words "under God" from the Pledge of Allegiance. Congress added the phrase during the Cold War, but Newdow convinced a San Francisco appeals court in June 2002 to have it removed.

**HE** British scientists are seeking 12,000 African women to test a vaccine killing vaginal cream designed to keep the AIDS-

producing virus HIV at bay. The huge trial came as U.S. demographers reported that world population growth is slowing, in part because of AIDS' devastating hold on Africa.

**SOUP** In a case of therapeutic run amok, a noted British brain surgeon had his hospital privileges suspended for five days for allegedly drinking an extra bowl of soup from the canteen. He said he was merely going back for seconds that he had forgotten to add in the first place. Officials had to postpone three surgeries while they sorted things out.

**WEAPONS** Russia's navy chief Admiral Vladimir Kurovsky landed his nuclear-powered flagship Peter the Great back in port, saying it was in decrepit shape and could "explode at any moment." He later retracted the remarks, while unnamed colleagues requested he would be sacked for trying to cry wolf.

Meanwhile, U.S. state's defense minister said the country is "making" several hundred Soviet-era missiles. They were supposed to have been destroyed, but there is no record of that. Not yet sign their valuable components have turned up on the black market.

**SPACE** The Mars rover Opportunity found itself up against a rocky rock on a land-



## CUTTING EDGE

It won't help to much in the woods, but the Swiss Army knife 0.03141 now comes with fresh memory for those who don't have home without a Swiss ID card.

place—evidence, NASA scientists said, that the frozen planet once had a possibly life-supporting atmosphere.

## BUDGET

**TAX MONEY** Ottawa will tell its remaining debt to Paris-Canada, worth over \$2 billion, ending a nearly 30-year issue as well as loan. The government will also give nearly \$700 million to aid to beef farmers by the end of the year. These were probably the two biggest moves in an otherwise cautious federal budget that officials said is the best.

Other notes of note included: widened learning benefits of up to \$2,000 for low-income kids, to go down \$350 account and be used only for education, \$1.4 billion, 10-year plan to develop sustainable cities like the Sydney tar ponds, as well as a \$1-billion fund for emerging environmental technologies.

May told a parliament story concerning that was widely connected with Gagliardi and other senior Liberals and that civil servants were told to "blindly follow" directions from above.

**GRAND FLY** With more low-level aviation showing up on B.C. farms, health authorities ordered a massive call of 275,000 chickens and turkeys on 10 large farms and several small ones in the Abbotsford area.

**JUSTICE** The Supreme Court of Canada ruled a Roman Catholic diocese in Newfoundland is fully liable for hundreds of sexual assaults committed by a priest. In the process, the court rejected Ottawa's position and appellate court rulings that voluntary and non-profit organizations (their show-upers) had specific knowledge of abuse of those organizations are to be blamed. Thirty Ontario nurses launched a \$300-

million lawsuit against the provincial government, citing inadequate protection during Toronto's SARS outbreak a year ago.

**MEDICAL MISHAPS** Health officials acknowledged two cases of over-the-counter cholestyramine poisoning in 2000 at Calgary's Peter Lougheed Centre—a revelation that came on the heels of news that two doctors presented at Calgary's Foothills Medical City had died of the same poisoning earlier this year because of a mix-up.

**QUALITY** A senior Manitoba Native leader, Grand Chief Margaret Swan, pleaded guilty to stealing at least \$5,000 from her band. The RCMP alleges she drew \$61,000 from band money for her own use. Details will come out when she is sentenced.

In Quebec, radio personality Robert Gallet was convicted of sex with an underage person, who he said he thought was of legal age. He was sentenced after with another minor, a 15-year-old girl who is the star in the case of an alleged ring of teen prostitutes (which defied the Quebec media and resulted in charges against 43 men).

**AVAILANCES** Youth groups will need a permit and an accredited guide when travelling through mountainous country in national parks, Parks Canada said. The new regulations result from the deaths last year of seven private school students from the Calgary area while skiing near Banffville, B.C.



## RECOUNT

Thousands of thousands took to the streets for days after election President Chai Shu-hua won re-election by the slimmest of margins—roughly 50,000 of nearly 13 million votes cast. The winner of election pitted the pro-Chinese mainland, China, who wants to free itself of foreign influence, against its main constituency, and U.S. China, who wanted the status quo. The election was a close one, but Chai's victory was a rout. He has promised a new era of reform. His critics say he is stilling for them.

**ALBERTA** In its budget, Alberta said that if oil prices stay as high as they've been, it could be nearly debt free in 2005, the centennial of its birth as a province.

## CANADA

**MEDICAL POT** Health Canada wants medical marijuana users to be able to pick up their government-certified pot at the neighborhood drugstore. A pilot project will get underway later this year in B.C.

**SPONSORSHIP** A cancer cell scientist who handled the paperwork on the controversial sponsorship program deeply contradicted former minister Allan Rock's recent testimony that he only met a couple of times a year with those in charge. Haggard Three



## Mansbridge on the Record



## NEWS THAT MATTERS

As one viewer told me, there's more to Canada than disasters and scandals

**THE LITTLE BANNER** remained across the bottom of the TV screen as I watched U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell talking on a U.S. network about 9/11. The "banner," as we in the business call it, is one of the most controversial additions to the world of cable news because many viewers find it distracting. It certainly was on this day, because as Powell dined on with his defense of the Bush administration's pre-Sept. 11 war, terrorism strategy, the words on the screen announced, "Medicare will be broke by 2019."

If you were an American, which story would concern you more: the latest Powell testimony—he answered these questions in various future disquisitions of times over the past 2½ years—or the fact this year's health protection program, such as it is, will be out of money in 13 years? It's a cruel war to remember the one that comes down over what truly impacts on people's daily lives? Or do we instead dwell on the not and thrust of politics, and when we're of that, stories we simply find entertaining?

For 10 nights in the past four months, I anchored broadcast news across the country filled with stories suggested by members of my audience—stories they felt weren't being told. Everything from new ways to ensure the viability of small rural schools, to how

“

We often take the simple way out, delivering easy-to-tell stories instead of reporting on things that have real meaning.

senior. Some viewers felt the same way, but the majority of those who contacted us said the approach was refreshing. In *Mouse Jaws*, like, one fellow told me, "You people don't realize there's more to the country than disasters and scandals." It was partly a version of the old but not-always-accurate ad, "You only cover the bad news." But I also think it was more than ad: we often take the simple way out, delivering easy-to-tell stories instead of reporting on things that have real meaning. He wanted us to look beyond the usual suspects. Three cheers for that.

But I wonder how far most people are willing to go with this view. That's why I mention that crawl under the Powell testimony—the possibility that Medicare could end up bankrupt was barely mentioned again. Because that's a tough story to explain, and we have enough to worry about in 2004 without worrying about 2019. So most journalists won't touch it, and I suspect most viewers or readers won't go through it.

One recent study by the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism concluded there's too much focus on the dissemination of news and not enough on the collecting and constructively analyzing it. The funny thing is, most journalists already know that. No one went into serious journalism to deliver stuff, or the easy lies. But it's all about survival to ignore what people want in favor of what people need. If you owned a restaurant, would you try to knockbrood on people when the place next door was serving pigeons? You know the business is better for your customers, but they're all leaving for the stuff that's never to swallow.

That's why Powell had the TV screen for almost two hours that day while Medicare's problems raged by in 30 seconds. Is that any right? I don't think so. Will it change? Not unless the public demands more broadcast.

Peter Mansbridge is Chief Correspondent of CBC Television News and Anchor of *The National*. To comment: letters@nbcnews.ca

## Passages

**DIED** For the Dutch she was a beloved monarch, while Canadians remember her as the wartime guest whose arrival gift to Ottawa of 20,000 tulip bulbs began an enduring cross-Atlantic friendship. **Princess Juliana**, who abdicated the throne at 71, handing it to her daughter **Queen Beatrix**, died of pneumonia at 94.



**DIED** Pierre Sévigny, a war hero who went on to become Conservative defense minister and the man at the centre of Canada's biggest political sex scandal, died in Montreal at 87. Sévigny had already left the Defence Minister's position on a point of principle when it became known that he'd had an affair with Gerda Meisinger, who turned out to be an East German spy.

**RETIRED** Justice Frank Iacobucci, one of the Supreme Court of Canada's most public jurists, will retire early this summer, at 67, to spend more time with his family. A national treasure since at 75. He is the second judge preparing to leave the nine-member bench. **Justice Louis LeBel** will become the new UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

**SHORTLISTED** Toronto-based novelist **Robyn M. Smith**, 51, is one of 30 finalists for the world's richest writing prize, the \$245,000 IMPAC Dublin Literary Award, for his book *Family Matters*.

**WON** Madras's National Correspondent **Mary J. Smith**, 55, whose weekly column explored the intricacies of how governments work, was the posthumous *Byron Award* for best public journalism, given by the Ottawa-based Public Policy Forum.

**DIED** Dominic Agostino, a fiery and well-loved Liberal MP who represented Blainville East in the Ontario legislature for nine years, died suddenly after a battle with liver cancer. He was 43.

**IRAN** **Mahmoud**, a top-ranked Canadian nuclear scientist in the 1970s and '80s who went on to develop the high-energy *PowerBar* and a quantum tunneling device, died of a heart attack in California. He was 51.

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following Yasser's death. The media was filled with news stories and failed attempts (including one by a nationally challenged 14-year-old boy with engineering skills) to hit his chest, who succeeded at a West Bank checkpoint, saying he no longer wanted to die.

In Jerusalem, traders at the Machnech Yehuda market, a frequent target of the post, reported a 50 per cent drop in business. It would normally have been bustling on Eilat (its uncles up for the approaching Yasser holiday). "People are afraid to come here," greengrocer Roni Amichai said. "They fear something is going to happen, but they don't know where or when. It would have been easier if they'd wanted to kill Yasser or kill Yasser. I'm afraid Hamas will retaliate as much as the army." City buses were at mass empty as people avoided what have become a preferred terrorist target. Haim Kassis, a 64-year-old film librarian at the

Holocaust University, said she was fearful of going into the city centre. "It is almost like a natural target. I normally use public transport, but today I took the car."

Bill and Deborah Tupper of Toronto and Ilse and Max, who are spending a holiday year in Jerusalem, said they too are being careful to avoid the obvious risks. When they met, they don't only in restaurants with a security guard posted at the door. They also limit where they go. Max can hang out with his friends. "We don't let him go out with a video, especially at night," Deborah said. "When he leaves alone, he knows he has to call on his mobile phone. If there's a terror attack, we need to know where he is." Still, the family, though anxious, has no intention of leaving. "We live in Jerusalem," said Deborah.

But even as the Israeli population braces for the worst, there are still some hopeful signs that after 35 years of conflict, the forces of violence may be losing momentum. A group of 60 prominent Palestinians published an open letter in the PLO's Al-Aqsa newspaper urging restraint in the face of Israel's "criminal and inhuman" actions. "We call upon our people, for the sake of our national mission and in order to bring an end to the occupation, to repress their rage and not once again in a widespread, popular uprising, that is based on clear goals and constructive rhetoric," said the statement, signed by several high-ranking members of Arafat's faction movement. Hassan Achcar, a well-known Palestinian legislator, said unity, not revenge, should be the priority. "Responding to Sharon could be the worst political and ethical bankruptcy," he told Reuters.

## TRAUMA IN TORONTO

A spate of hate crimes shocks the city

AMID HEIGHTENED Holocaust tensions, the Toronto area's Jewish community faced its own troubles: the target one week rash of anti-Semitic acts in recent history. From swastikas and messages advocating death to lawn spray-painted on synagogues, schools and homes of death-camp survivors, to the \$20,000 worth of destruction at a Jewish cemetery, the hate crimes shocked many. "It's disgusting that this targeted Holocaust survivors," said Ed Morgan, chair of the Ontario Jewish Congress Ontario Region. "It's particularly traumatic for those individuals."

That trauma may be larger, but the spirit, at least at work's end, appeared to be over. A message with anti-defamation, with "Jews Rule" spray-painted on a wall. Questions then turned to who sent who. Police arrested a 41-year-old Iranian man for defacing the fence around a construction site, but two teenage boys for making crank calls, but none of them were suspects in the general spate of crimes. Motive has been difficult to pin down: could the spree have been linked



to militant Holocaust events, sentiments whipped up by the film *The Passion of the Christ*, or was it a spiritual reaction to the just-released report by the Toronto police of hate crimes and showing hate crime at an all-time low? "It's ridiculous," said Det. James Hoyle. "Unless we know their mental state, sometimes it's a little ambiguous what their message is."

The incidents, though, had a unifying effect on the Jewish community. A rally at the Jewish political and religious leaders drew together a diverse group of almost 2,000—Protestants, Jews, elderly, both wealthy and poor, to defend

them who stood outside in the rain with the Israeli flag as they sang songs of solidarity, to twin girls jumping up in standing ovations for Det. James Hoyle and Det. Anthony.

Not all opinions on where to lay blame differed. While some nodded when Toronto police Chief Johnathan Pankratz called the criminals "truly evil people," others felt the sadists were not so much due to evil as ignorance. "Shameless punk kids," said one man who was seen embracing cheered by bullies back in the '70s. "Blame the parents." Meanwhile, the community encouraged police to speak out against anti-Semitism. "Silence would be the worst possible thing," said Morgan. "The worst disasters start slow." CYNTHIA KAYNE/TELUG

"Resistance does not have to be violent."

In the short term, however, the prospects for peace seem bleaker than ever. "The real enemy" is a solution, delivered with such flare by the United States, Russia, the European Union and the UN in 2003, is buried deep in the glovebox. The outraged Arab reaction to Yasser's assassination has caused serious domestic problems for the leaders of Egypt and Jordan, who have been running a delicate diplomacy between the Israeli and Palestinian track-chained negotiations with the Syrians are on hold. And George W. Bush, facing re-election and struggling with questions about his own war on terror, seems unlikely to make any the way. Did Gaoat, a veteran Israeli journalist specializing in Arab affairs, says Sharon and his advisors have decided no real program will be made until Arafat finally leaves the scene. And if that they could hurry along his departure, like Yasser's, they are willing to bide their time. "In the next three years you are going to see the young leadership of Palestine, who are driving Arafat and Yasser, come to the fore," says Gaoat. "They



Sharon was one of the few who came to the Knesset for Camp David's 25th anniversary.

are much more willing to introduce reforms and democracy to the system."

Other analysts, such as Joseph Alpher, a former researcher for Israel's Mossad intelligence agency, doubt the conflict can be solved by force or strategy. "You can't deter suicide bombers—it just increases their motivation," he says. The Middle East, the

source of so much concern for the world, has become a political vacuum. "None of the relevant leaders—George Bush, Ariel Sharon, Yasser Arafat—has a realistic strategy for peace," says Alpher. In the meantime, average Israelis and Palestinians are left to nurture a dwindling hope for the future, and wait for the sunny day when they might have an anniversary that's worth celebrating. ☐

With Eric Selzer in Jerusalem

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# CRUNCH TIME

The health-care prognosis is bad, so why didn't the budget address funding?

**HEALTH CARE** is supposed to be just above everybody's most pressing concern. Paul Martin calls it, along with education, his top priority. Health dominates by far the biggest portion of provincial budgets—around 40 per cent—no province above ours in Polls show that it's the Canadian public's first most worry.

Given all that, you'd think it would be the dominant national political issue. But while last week's federal budget did contain a bundle of health measures—including a long promised, one-time only \$2 billion top-up health payment to the provinces, and a new

public agency to deal with the new SARS—it was all but silent on the funding crunch that's threatening medicine. And though federal Health Minister Pierre Pettigrew raised after the budget was tabled about

**LIBERALS** point to Martin's planned August meeting with the premiers as the time to strike a new deal

Ottawa's desire to negotiate an ambitious 10-year fix for the system, he offered absolutely no details. "The signal was mixed—the budget message, Pettigrew's comment positive," said Manitoba Premier Gary Doer. "They've demonstrated, in fact, that they don't have a plan."

Canadians might well be forgiven for imagining the plan was already in place. Roy Romanow delivered what was touted as a landmark royal commission report on health care in December 2002, and optimism thought it would provide the key policy prescriptions. Along with more complicated

reform ideas, Romanow urged Ottawa to boost federal funding to 25 per cent of provincial health spending, up from about 16 per cent now. That hasn't happened, and Premier Minister Ralph Goodale made no commitment to hit the one-quarter target in his first budget—to the dismay of the provinces. Instead, federal Liberals point ahead to Martin's planned meeting with the premiers in August as the time to strike a new long-term funding deal.

But that five-minutes' conference might be well after the spring election (but many insiders are still predicting "Would health care even figure prominently in a campaign? Potentially not. The Liberals might decide to avoid showing their hand in a platform just before they expect to sit down to hard bargaining with the provinces. And their main adversaries, the Conservatives under newly elected leader Stephen Harper, seem reluctant to taking saying much, con- sidering how badly the old Canadian Alliance was beaten up over that issue during the 2000 campaign for allegedly favour- ing two-tier health care.



New Conservative leader Harper has said he favours letting the provinces experiment.

But if the basic issue is generating far too many little actions these days at the federal level, the provincial is quiet. Another minister, Martin's has learned that Ontario

Premier Dalton McGuinty's government is closely studying a detailed proposal from two University of Toronto health economists, titled "Blueprint for Comprehensive Primary Health-Care Reform in Ontario." The report urges the government to go ahead with dramatic reforms that would eventually lead to most doctors working in so-called primary care groups, along with nurses and such other care providers as physiotherapists and pharmacists. Instead of doctors charging the provincial health insurance plan on a fee for service basis, the new groups would get an average annual fee of \$366 per patient from the province to provide the full range of services. It's an unusually detailed proposal along lines that have been widely discussed but tested in only a few innovative clinics.

Peter Cope, the University of Toronto health economics professor who is the chief author of the report, argues that Ontario and other provinces have little choice but to move quickly with the type of reforms he's proposing. "There seems to be almost universal consensus among health policy experts



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## TAKING AIM AT OTHER HEALTH ISSUES

While provincial premiers slammed the federal government for dodging the pressing issue of long-term health funding in last week's budget, the Liberals did take aim at a range of other issues. Finance Minister Ralph Goodale's financial blueprint highlighted a number of new and previously announced initiatives, even as Ottawa put off the big money questions to a planned summer meeting of Prime Minister Paul Martin and the premiers.

■ Prompted by the SARS outbreak, Ottawa earmarked \$404 million already in Health Canada's budget for a new Canada Public Health Agency. It will be responsible for preparing for emergencies, and managing infectious diseases and some chronic diseases. A new chief public health officer will help set up the agency and how it will work with the provinces, which actually deliver health services—including in emergencies. ■ Another \$150 million over two years will be spent to improve Canada's readiness to cope with emergencies. Emergency response teams will be established and stockpiles of supplies, including portable hospitals, set up. The provinces will be given \$100 million to invest in information systems to keep track of public health developments, especially monitoring for

infectious diseases. The idea is to develop a system that would quickly pinpoint the outbreak of the next SARS.

■ The provinces will get \$300 million over three years for immunization, particularly vaccines for children and adolescents. Manitoba Premier Gary Doer said that the funding is welcome, but he pointed out it will not be enough to make expanded immunization programs available to everybody—leaving provinces to decide whether to top up the programs from their own stretched budgets or make the shots available free of charge only to low-income earners.

■ The provinces get a \$2-billion one-time bonus to supplement their Canada Health and Social Transfer payments. This was promised in last year's budget, assuming the federal surplus for 2003-04 allowed it, and confirmed by Paul Martin in his January meeting with the premiers. But the provinces had hoped the boost would be added permanently to their annual cash transfers payment. That base amount stands at \$35.8 billion for fiscal 2004-05, and is slated to

double (for the left) with a 1% to announce a range of long-term initiatives.

rise to \$20.3 billion in 2007. 80-year-old growth rate of 3.2 per cent, more than double Ottawa's forecast, for the pace of economic growth. Apparently, though, not enough. 26

that this is the model needed to move forward," he says. Among its main advantages: paying various health providers under one roof would mean doctors would only see patients who really need their costly attention. And moving away from the traditional fee-for-service payment method would also create an incentive for doctors to maximize the number of patients they treat, making the yearly costs more predictable for provinces. "The major resistance to change," Coyte says, "comes from physicians who want to enhance their income base." Patients, on the other hand, would flock to the new groups, he predicts, having by around the clock service from a range of health professionals, including at least three to five doctors per group.

While Ottawa's Liberals examine the potential for reform within the bounds of universality, Alberta's Conservatives are again making waves about a far more controversial idea to break some of the chains of Canada's health care. Last week, Alberta Finance Minister Pat Nelson tabled a budget that boosted health spending by 8.4 per cent, bringing the government's total annual outlay to \$3 billion—double what was a decade ago. "It just has to stop," Nelson said. "This system will crumble." But Gary Mar, the province's health minister, left little doubt that Alberta is determined to get control of

they may feel are important that relate to health care," he pointed out in an interview. But to allow private payment for some services, Alberta faces the prospect of Ottawa kicking back—by cutting federal transfers for the salaries of the doctors or parts of the Canada Health Act.

Stephen Harper is Alberta's closest ally on the federal scene. Yet the new Conservative boss, who himself won his party's March 28 leadership vote over rivals Belinda Stronach and Tony Clement, craggy about explicitly endorsing the sort of private Mar proposes—a combination of basic services covered by public insurance and enhanced or special services funded privately. Harper insists that he's not letting the provinces experience freely, given that they have no constitutional jurisdiction over health. But pressed on whether a Conservative government in Ottawa would allow provinces to let more services be covered outside government insurance, he doesn't deny it. "I would bring a down-to-earth principle: will anybody be denied medically necessary services because of inability to pay?" he told in



Alberta's Mar says Canadians should be able to look at different options.

a recent interview. "No province is proposing to have a parallel private system for core insured services. They are not asking for it. As a federal prime minister, I wouldn't be prepping it."

With the federal Liberals vague on their policy ideas, and Conservatives guarded

about theirs, it seems health might not get tackled squarely in the widely expected May or June election. Not surprisingly, with the sponsorship scandal swirling on week after week, Harper wants to make Liberal critics' hopes and mismanagement of taxpayers' money the hottest questions. More anticipated by the Martin Liberals appear almost as willing to let these issues dominate—ready to defend the steps they've taken to stem up problems they hope voters will blame on the old Jean Chrétien regime. It may be left to Jack Layton's NDP to try to push health to the forefront. Manitoba's Doer, an NDPer himself, predicts voters will vote on it. "The political parties and the press decide what issues are debated and covered," he said. "But the people decide what issues they will vote on." Martin and Harper might not be ready to spell out specifics on health. The question is whether an election can push them to a level of clarity that matches the urgency of the problem. 27

To view our photo gallery of the Conservative leadership campaign, visit [www.middle.ca/gallery](http://www.middle.ca/gallery)

**IT MAY** be left to Jack Layton's NDP to push health to the forefront of the election campaign expected this spring

comes by at least experiencing with letting more services be paid for by private insurance plans, or out-of-pocket. "Canadians should have the opportunity to look at all the different options," he said. "Generally when they'll see in many countries that have social-democratic traditions, places like Sweden and Australia, it's they have a blend of things that the basic health care system pays for as if other things that can be obtained through some form of private insurance."

Mar said the pressure for change will ultimately come from aging Canadian baby boomers. "It will seem strange to them that they can spend money on themselves for everything else, but they can't for things



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## awakening

From surly clerks to demon drivers, Howard Stern to the House of Commons, we're suffering through an epidemic of incivility. So—what of it?

**FIRST, A LOUD** snoring sound. Then the howling of gale-force winds. Finally, a figure of sighted sad rain, discarded as so one in particular but with an echo of a half dozen ongoing for Canada passengers. This, alas, was the soundtrack to my recent flight from Vegas to Toronto—thanks to a leather dial, 30 some thing, Martin reading these hell sounds in my row. And that was just the beginning: we had hardly reached cruising altitude when my seatmate began prodding me with the corner of his tail fin, spontaneously deciding to give a few of the models he valued to “do.” I smiled weakly and nodded, hoping he’d leave me alone. But after a prolonged round of snuffing and fidgeting, he leaned toward me again, this time pressing to one of his oversized nostrils. “You know,” he confided, glancing about the cabin, “a girl pretty

row up there when you inhale the kind of substances I do.”

Now, I hate to sound unkind, especially in an article about incivility. But you can forgive a person who endures my legs cooped up with a horrendously challenged cocktail for grinning a tad perversely. Which is why, as I left the plane in Toronto, I may have been heard muttering something about racial selection being overrated. Or the need for more desecration at airport security. Whatever it was, I’m not proud of it.

But that’s the thing about rudeness: it’s contagious. Gross me out, ruin my flight, invade my space, and you might not hear about it from me. But there’s a good chance the next subway car I meet will. And we all know from anecdotal experience that our planet isn’t the only place where it spreads. It seems everywhere



ILLUSTRATIONS BY MAURICE VELOSO





"THE MAN just turned to me and said, 'F--- you.' His wife gave me the finger, and they were both, like, deadly serious. They took all their garbage and dumped it on the ground."

not kind. They are trapped in a narcissistic cage of our own design."

Wow. That's a lot to lay at the feet of a few well-meaning gray diplomats, and it's probably worth noting here that young people aren't the only ones acting disrespectfully. In 1994, Libby, a 16-year-old from Sherwood Park, Alta., rode with a couple in their late 40s who stopped at her drive-through window at the Wendy's where she worked for summer. Though Libby was clearly creeped out by the couple's rudeness, she just dutifully disposed of a bag of garbage from their car. When she sweetly suggested they use the trash bin around the corner, within 30 seconds of their window, they snapped. "The man just turned to me and said, 'F--- you,'" Libby recalls. "His wife gave me the finger, and they were both, like, deadly serious. Really angry. They took all of their napkins and garbage—everything from their car, even stuff like Tim Hortons coffee cups—and dumped it on the ground."

**SO THE GENERATION** following us in its adulthood may have just as much to complain about as we do. But there does remain one intriguing point about the roots of incivility—and the possible implications for public policy. Should incivility be treated strictly as a bad behavior, something exclusively within the realm of individual and family life? Or is it a symptom of larger social ills? Let's say Canadians are behaving worse in hospital waiting rooms than they were 20 years ago, do we blame the system enough by underfunding its hospitals? Or do we blame Canadians—doctors, nurses, patients and parents' families—for acting like jerks?

They're the kinds of issues Angus first studied seriously when he was writing his 1996 book *Shameless*. How the New Economy at Cheong Cheong Lee. His conclusion—after the decay of public infrastructure has eroded the collective trust, so operation and civility in Canada is an overly political site. But the consequences, Angus argues, are not. "People don't often connect the dots from this market-driven, privatized, neo-neo-gothic mentality that runs our lives and the level of civility in everyday life," he says. "But there is a level of something ailing, and people are feeling alone. And ultimately, that comes right back and bites us in the behind emotionally. More isolation. More rage. More negativity. Basically, we end up missing out on the richness and energy in everyday interactions."

It seems right, then, that the private sector is feeling the move more in private business in the office and the marketplace as a whole. If you work for a major corporation, you're probably soon the employee. "Economic Intelligence: How to Reduce to Your Firm,"



believes there is a long-term in the business community for better or ill, that's from management on down. "I believe people are craving civility for reasons of confidence," she says, "so they're not wary of every man who they're saying or doing the wrong thing."

Of course, this exposes the whole civility movement as a collection of bourgeois pragmatism—this matters as we know them back to perpetuate class differences has left to luxury (their costumes, their manners, their speech and facial expressions) is not one way they could distinguish each other from the peasants. But there are modest concepts of civility reach beyond class differences to our very emotional and spiritual well-being. "Manners and civility are an area of human behavior where altruism and self-interest converge," he says. "If we're serious, we have trouble holding the standards of social support that are central to our society and our health."

All of which, I suppose, is bad news for my air-line acquaintance as a man Henry Higgins himself couldn't transform into an acceptable specimen of humanity. As our plane glides to a halt in Toronto, he immediately began piling baggage from his overhead bin onto the floor, allowing much of it to tumble onto my lap. I'd like to be able to say that, as this chaotic process, I continued to smilely heart as the last dregs this creature spit before the greater wasteland of society, or that I wouldn't mind with any politeness and charm, engaging him in a conversation of some purpose. Instead, I followed him off the airplane in hostile silence, muttering my words as I passed him in the doorway before melting into a crowd as I could manage in the airport crowd. I'm pretty sure he didn't notice.

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## THE MADRID NON-EFFECT

The terrorist bombings had little impact on the world's stock markets

**WHY DO SOME CRISES** lead to huge financial market sell-offs and others, more shocking at the time, trigger only modest reactions? Many investors have asked this question since the Madrid massacre of March 11. To find the answer, consider the situation in the markets on March 10.

After a year of strong performance, a global stock market correction had been under way since late January, led by speculative technology stocks. This downward trend coincided with an uptick in the U.S. dollar, which was rallying steadily against the euro and

the Canadian dollar, and against gold, after a year of major greenback declines. Like all market corrections, it came as the usually endless flow of good news that had sustained stock prices started to dwindle. U.S. investors' confidence—the optimism measure of the *Barron's* Index—had popped up the entire world economy for the year—suddenly slumped in February. Oil prices fell—and sharply. So while markets were, that all good news was over, like most of prior jumps of news in decades, due to war or GPEC. It was around the time visible and easily recognizable of what looks like the broadest and potentially most gloomy general commodity price rise since 1990.

At that moment, terrorism struck in Spain. Their approval goal was to swing the election against the ruling Popular party, the centre-right group led through two elections by Jose Maria Aznar. After years of Socialist misrule, this party had brought Spain to unprecedented prosperity, ending unemployment from 22 per cent to 11 per cent, and was looking toward its election on March 14 under Aznar's third period success. The opposition Socialists had only one big try to regain voter support: Aznar had supported the U.S. by sending Spanish troops into Iraq. With about half the 90 per cent of Spaniards opposed the war.

The event bomb killed 190 people and injured some 1,500 others. Who was to blame? Some Spaniards were amazed. A tape, apparently from al-Qaeda, was found, blaming responsibility for the outrage and noting that March 11 is exactly two and a half years after al-Qaeda's success on 9/11.

"You live life, we love death," which gives an example of what the prophet Mohammed said," the terrorist tape seemed to explain their message.

On election day, the voters rejected the Popular party. The Socialist won, and the new leader announced Spain will pull its troops out of Iraq unless the UN takes over the operation. This is, in many circumstances, the biggest victory for Islamic terrorism since 9/11, crowning their "martyr" in Israel and Bali. Analysts warn that Spain's biggest industry, will sustain serious long-term damage.

So what was the response of the markets to this ghastly event? Yes, stocks fell world-wide, but a stock market crash was not far off where they were in the air.

**WHEN** some investors rushed to sell stocks, there were lots of dollars floating in the global pool to absorb the selling without setting off a self-reinforcing crash

markets, which had been struggling to hold above 1.22 to the U.S. dollar, sensibly rallied modestly, and a week later was trading near 1.23. Gold, the classic crash hedge, was trading around US\$440 an ounce on March 10, and only made it to US\$419 a week later, and a renewed commodity rally.

Why didn't stocks tumble the way they did after 9/11, or the way they did when Russia defaulted and leading hedge fund firms Long-term Capital Management went broke? From an analysis of market prices in the last 50 years, it becomes apparent that when the U.S. economy is growing, and when global

liquidity is high and rising, stock markets can shrug off horrible shocks.

So what is "global liquidity"? It is the supply of short-term financial resources in global markets—most particularly today the Eurodollar market—free legally unencumbered pool of billions of greenbacks floating around in banks outside the U.S. Although all short-term liquidity is significant, U.S. dollar liquidity is overwhelmingly the most important, because the value of most global debt, stocks and trade is denominated in greenbacks.

Every significant global financial crisis has occurred as a result of a squeeze on the supply of U.S. dollars in the global system, either because holders were panicking, into other currencies on margin, or because the Federal Reserve was tightening credit at the time unexpected but new hit the markets. For example, March has been one of the strongest months for the dollar since the war market began in February 2002. That means dollar liquidity was growing as other currencies were converging into dollars, increasing the size of the dollar pool. We know this inflow

comes mostly from the central banks of Japan and China, which hold down their own currencies' values by buying hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of U.S. Treasury debt. So when markets were shocked by the bombing, and some investors rushed to sell stocks and liquidate dollar investments, there were lots of dollars floating in the global pool to absorb the selling without setting off a self-reinforcing crash.

Conclusion: If al-Qaeda strikes again on a bigger scale, let's hope the U.S. economy isn't slowing, then the Fed's hand over the system attached to the Eurodollar pool, that great global cushioning waterbed, and the greenback is sucking up all of its brief million within as long-term bear markets.

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## GONE HOOPS CRAZY

Where Canadian hardwood junkies dance, drink—and watch a little ball

**SECTION 23**, not 30, is the Halifax Micro Centre hallway to Capstan Carnival—as far as wherever the Canadian crimson-jerseyed basketball championships roll into town. Nearly every March for the last 17 years, the 58-year-old basketball fan St. John's, Nfld., has set court-side cheering on his beloved St. Francis Xavier X-Men. He's back again this year, making his team's second win over the York Vikings. "A bunch of us have been coming to Section 23 for years," says Carroll, who graduated from St. FX in 1966 and will proudly wear his school ring. "Halifax is, and always will be, the epic cradle of our passionate wild basketball in this country."

Welcome to Hoops Heaven, Canadian style. Halifax has hosted the northern version of March Madness since 1963, and

while the tournament's main goal is to crown a national champ, the big winners are the city's hotels, restaurants and bars—powered by a \$7-million economic slam dunk. "Being the town where it's always either business or a no-brainer," says Eric Grant, looking toward his brother William Davis & Grill, a family-run restaurant located a block from the Micro Centre, "sales increase by about 40 per cent during the tournament. It's also nice to see people from all over Canada here year after year. It's tough to remember names, but people always remember we're here. It's like a little reunion."

**WHEN** the fireworks and the bars spring to life. At the Lower Dock, located near the harbour, Dave Whelan, bartender Darren

and their close friend Tim Toner celebrate the X-Men's win. "We worked in all our good-life parties to travel out here for the weekend," says Dave, 44, a middle school vice-principal from Riverton, N.B., at his seventh straight tournament. "Basketball is just better out here." The three hold up their mug in a toast of cheers. "So it is the best," adds Toner, jumping another drink up of glory. Then, as the band starts into yet another Irish drinking song, the friends show their appreciation by taking a shot along with beer they can and dance their own version of a jig.

The may is, this Saturday night belongs to the losers. With their little dreams dashed and out-of-control sweat, players plunge into the rough life without risk of suffering

around the court the next day. "This is the one time of the year I feel sorry," says Chris Wilson, the 26-year-old owner and head of security at the Liquor Dome—a complex housing four bars under one roof that is the most popular late-night spot in the city. Players, fans and locals dance and drink and will pass 3 a.m. "This is certainly a party crowd tonight," says Wilson. Of course, it's not hard to find beer flowing in Halifax. By some counts, the city has the most bars per capita of anywhere in Canada—where they say the world. "It's a great

the crown jewel of CBS championship."

There are occasional run-ins that find that long run-in host in earlier, but he's to avoid control away—Halifax's being the most trouble-free come opening. "We're a safe bar," says Peterson. "If we promise the CBS a certain amount of money, they know they'll get it. We have a professional crowd, and the alcohol love where they're like really."

**THOSE SLOW** to rise on championship Sunday, March 21, don't miss view much



GOING TO THE FX, fans cheer, and just happened MVP Mike Stewart goes for the shot. Wright shows off his fancy foot after the shot was blocked.



drinking town," says Chris Wright, a 20-year-old forward with the Calgary Dinos, who tore up the dance floor after his team topped another weekend. "And the fan support out here for basketball is incredible. I haven't seen anything like this anywhere else in Canada."

**THOUGH** A big money maker for the city, the tournament doesn't come cheap. The event costs about \$500,000 to run, including a \$200,000 guarantee to Canadian broadcasting fees. Organizers depend heavily on support from sponsors, who chip in about half the needed cash. "We came to the table with \$100,000 for the next two years," says Brian Winkler, a local lawyer who is the Halifax Regional Municipality one of the sponsors. "We need to keep this tournament here. It's too important to lose." Ticket sales make up the other half—and sometimes more. "This event carries with a big risk," says John Patterson, the event chair. "But we've proven up the challenge. Before we took the tournament over in the early '80s, about 140 would show up to the games, held in small gyms. Sometimes, we've attracted more than 30,000. We've made it

rain blankets the city's oldest area until the early afternoon. But in game after game, a discernible buzz surrounds the Micro Centre. On the court, the defending champion Carleton Ravens and third-ranked St. FX battle through their pre-game discussion, in a pep-rally hip-hop beat. While there are small pockets of Raven fans among the 4,900 in attendance (nearly 20,000 people pass through the gates during the four

**THE tournament is an economic slam dunk for the city's big winners: hotels, restaurants and bars**

days), X-men has home court advantage. Fans sporting X-Men blue are everywhere. The most vocal, in the case of all the teams, are a group based in from Antigonish, N.S.—mostly young women wearing X-men's red and yellow good-looking suits at the Ravens.

In Section 23, Carleton Carroll is noticeably absent. Turns out he had to catch a

early flight home, missing his X-Men's ride. But, to his 16-year-old nephew Dale is happy to fill his seat. "My uncle wants me to cheer for FX, but there's no way they'll happen," says Dale, who lives near Halifax and has attended the tournament since he was 13. "I normally cheer for St. Mary's because my dad went there, but since they're not playing I'm backing the Ravens. I'll cheer for anyone but St."

In addition to university students and grey-haired grads reminiscing about their own glory days on the court, the tournament

attracts a big draw for families. Over the last five years, more than 70,000 kids have played organized ball in Nova Scotia. A few of those young hoopers are sitting in the top row of section 14 with their mother, Carolyn Archibald. For four children, aged 5 to 12, are covered in temporary tattoos and wear X-Men shirts. During the fourth quarter of a very tight game, they cheer every FX score and shout in their seats when the Ravens make a shot. "There had used to play for FX, which is a big reason it is so exciting for them," says Archibald, adding that all but her 10-year-old Kaitlin play in youth leagues. "When we're not here for a game, they're watching from home. They're huge fans."

At the final game, the Ravens start the court to celebrate their second straight national title—a tall thing 63-59 win. And while most fans put on their team and head toward the courts, the Archibalds are sitting at the on-court festivity as if sharing in their heroes' loss. "We'll be back next year," says their mom. "Just look at their faces. This tournament means so much." Looks like section 14 belongs to the next generation of defeated ball fans. **B**



## JUSTIFIABLE HOMICIDE

Shelik Yassin was one of the foulest terrorists the world has known

LAST WEEK, Israel assassinated Sheik Ahmed Yassin, sending him to the next plane he had followed to heaven. Whether falling like this was a wise move by the Israelis, it was certainly justified. The question one could legitimately put to them was why they had waited so long. Yassin was one of the foulest terrorists the world has known.

He began in the Muslim Brotherhood, a medieval Egyptian Islamist group, five of whose members assassinated President Anwar Sadat in 1981. In 1987, Yassin founded Hamas. Now, he had a private organization all his own which he led until death. He may not

have intended the suicide bombing, but he certainly answered to it with deadly results. He even encouraged women to blow themselves up—a large example in the Arab Muslim world of preserving female equality.

Yassin never compromised when it came to his goal of the end of Israel or of Israel. Occasionally, Hamas would create a veneer and outline the necessity to destroy Israel in "stages" with tactical limitations (process) but Hamas never wavered in its mission to wipe the Jewish state off the map.

After Yassin's assassination, the world watched the usual mass for someone killed by leaders: parades of mourning, hooded and masked youths singing songs of vengeance. The Palestinian masses wept and the Islamic flag for more blood and death, then waved the burning of Israel and American flags.

Undoubtedly, the same crowds expected to be present the next day with respect by the credulous world, as if there be honour were, merely a cultural difference and not a profound moral one.

Hamas was condemned by all the usual suspects. UN Foreign Secretary Jack Straw went by CNN out of regrettably adjectives. The EU was apologetic. But it was Foreign Affairs Minister Bill Graham's official statement that this enraged me. His five-sentence acknowledgment recognized "there's right to defend self and its citizens against terrorists," but also noted that Canada has "designated Hamas as a terrorist organization with Sheik Ahmed Yassin as a recognized leader." He then stated that, Graham announced that, "The extra judicial killing of Yassin is hereby unacceptable and contrary to Israeli-Inter-

national obligations." His concluding note was: "Canada calls for restraint and reaffirms that the only solution to this issue is a negotiated process."

Strange Graham. If his good offices are unable to cover the insurgency among these war-torn, they should be fired. We've come to expect a foreign policy bleed to private, but at least give us the suggestion of logic, however faint. "Terrorism" has a specific meaning. Terrorism doesn't denote a political disagreement; it denotes the difference between war and war crimes. Those who use terror have chosen to live in a state unforgivable and detestable, outside every's norms. Graham's statement says, in essence, that while Canada acknowledges Israel is dealing with a mad dog, the solution is dialogue with it.

**FOREIGN** Affairs Minister Bill Graham's official statement says, in essence, that while Canada acknowledges Israel is dealing with a mad dog, the solution is dialogue with it.

dialogue is dialogue with it. Further, before Graham's statement was laid out as a "court judgment" process, perhaps he should tell us what would be the appropriate judicial process. Given the circumstances in Gaza today, should Yassin have been arrested and brought to court? In that case, who would have arrested him and how? Had Graham considered the number of innocent lives that would be lost in trying to do this? And, in the unlikely event an arrest had been successful, who would have tried him? The phrase "extra-judicial" is used as if there were clear, legitimate

answers to these questions.

One of my many objections to the International Criminal Court is that more the majority of countries today have corrupt and despotic regimes, international law is not only ignored but reflects their agendas. The ICC is supposed to prosecute war crimes and crimes against humanity. What could be a worse course against humanity than inducing women and children to blow themselves up as packed bombs?

Yet I never heard a peep out of anyone associated with the court about bringing the Yassin of the world to justice. Yassin has been a cry-brother of the ICC's—no long condemning Israel at the UN's 2001 Durban Conference on Racism—to prosecute the people behind suicide bombings. There have been few warnings issued for my wife's husband in Europe supporting suicide bombings and providing her with aid.

A Spanish magazine created a warrant for the aging Gen. Augusto Pinochet. Other European magazines wanted to question Henry Kissinger, but who might come out the side line are having war-time signs after the leaders of Hamas, Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad or Arafat and his Al-Aqsa martyrs?

The EU nations rely on their anti-Americanism to protect their free-trade bonanza. Unhappily, an academic found America wrote in a defence article last week in the Wall Street Journal, "who is dealing with the peoples of Israel" will not save them from the nuclear Armageddon we will have Canada.

I know that jailing bank robbers doesn't stop bank robberies in India, however, bank robbery is one of the actions available to show disrespect to the law. Here the problem is reversed. All the same, while condemning Sheik Ahmed Yassin will certainly not eliminate terrorism—at the very least it is another stated Yassin.

Barbara Amiel's columns appear bi-monthly. Send her comments to: [barbara@barbaramiel.ca](mailto:barbara@barbaramiel.ca)

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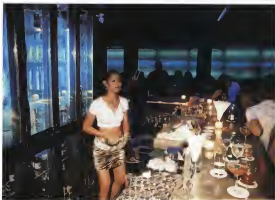
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# ONE NIGHT IN BANGKOK

Thailand's government is trying to change the city's wild-and-crazy image. Good luck, says STEVE BURGESS.

ON BANGKOK'S Sukhumvit Road, barely a man stands for the roasting mid-winter 38°C heat. But, for a Vancouverite, it's a great place to be right now—warm, friendly, and half a world away from the loneliness of the Canada. Right now it's rather a relief to be where no one gives a damn about hockey.

Bernard did make the paper here. But why? Not there's something else that's going on here more attention, and although soft sports related, it does bring Vancouver to

mind. It seems like The government is doing a page out of Vancouver's playbook, then in Vancouver eyes at the opposite direction. If Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has his way, Bangkok could replace Vancouver as the new No Fun City.

Bangkok is more than a spot on a map like Las Vegas or Monte Carlo, the name alone screams up a crowd of tourists and sex. The picture was painted by that '60s Murray Head hit single, with lines such as

At the Q bar, which has been described as 'the bar of choice for anyone who's gay or lesbian'.

One explains Bangkok's wilder rough guys usually, and Andy Gail, a little hairy, 70s surfer dude like his Cowboy and Nerve Plaza offer access to crowded a farm boy's house—hundreds of people packed with dancing ladies, only with a number one bar for easy ordering, and clubs full of what the locals call "baby boys" who are so inviting that it's not the worst women in the street are the ones to be most suspicious of.

That is Bangkok to say the least. And yes, if you are looking for a bar club to hit at 3 a.m., you had best find a male (or female) capable of moving the bar. It's Bangkok in No Fun City, Vancouver is currently enjoying a real run of it as a club downtown the downtown area. And in Bangkok! The boomers hang over the bar, a constant of club owners and the story "How many bars will be left?" they're "the end club hours, don't shut on them yet!"

The Thaksin government has indeed decided enough is enough, and Bangkok's

message is clear. A proposal was passed that would have turned the city into an Asian Vegas, with 70 to 80 clubs closing and a matching order for police. Since then, the proposal has been revised and re-revised, currently calling for 1 a.m. closing for all clubs (subject to further change). A newly wide-way are police raids in which clubs are raided while every person and staff given a warning. Even the Sox Cowboy district is now a no-go area—most TV ratings showed lots of girls and foreign (Bangkok) quacking up at a makeshift drag queen contest.

Andrew Clark is not happy. Clark is owner of Q bar which even the Lonely Planet travel guide describes as "Bangkok's bar of choice for anyone who's gay or lesbian." That would include the likes of David Byrne and Colin Farrell, who dropped in while filming the upcoming epic Alexander. Q bar has not been raided yet, but other upscale establishments have. "Shutting down an entire club and forcing everyone to sleep in—this is something you'll never get away with in Canada," Clark says.

As a Vancouver Island boy, Clark should know. He points out that the Bangkok club scene is a relatively new one, with lots of the visitors mostly associated with certain Vancouver bars. One of the first nightclubs I did part a familiar, ugly scene. Outside a club called Red, a large, disheveled man raged together while blood-soaked youth sat nearby dead. All that was missing were skates and a guy in a striped shirt. But it started not this incident, strangely more from a Cornish point of view, was a male French sex worker who had come to the end of his act in a dignified, and somewhat injured, old lady. There was a lot of talk about it that the Frenchman would now be a person in Bangkok, but he was not.

Quietly enough, the government's club crackdown is unlikely to reach the main source of Bangkok's dirty reputation: the sex trade. "A lot of government people are



Prostitution is not just a street corner trade practiced by elderly street-side sex workers.

involved in the massage parlor business," Clark claims, "aggravation probably not going to be attacked." Aside from the huge tourist dollars being in, there's another factor protecting the Bangkok sex industry—stepping in would be about as simple as embracing Buddhism.

Talk Nung, for example. She is a Bangkok woman and Q bar is a Wednesday evening, one mother. Friendly face in the crowd. Nung works as a clerk in a museum, making about 6,000 baht a month (less than \$200). For the extra money home to her parents in the countryside and help support family needs.

**CRACKING** down on clubs is unlikely to affect the main source of the city's dirty reputation: the sex industry.

her in Bangkok, too. She made this because men who take her home soon discover that their charms are not enough to seal the deal. Two thousand baht, well a candle, will also be required.

So prostitution in Bangkok is not a street corner trade practiced only by elderly street-side sex workers. Even some local like Q bar provide more than just a place to have sex. Most of the men who go to Q bar are not looking for sex, but for a good time. "I know that even some of the models and those people who come in here will sometimes make money on the side," Nung says. The Bangkok sex trade is ubiquitous. "Maybe seven per cent of the girls at the bar are not asking for money," she claims, pulling an oddly specific figure out of the air. Her friend thinks that's an exaggeration, but even her peepers number of some point at possibly 40 per cent on every given night.

Many of the sex trade workers have long-term goals beyond the

nightly life. For dark-skinned Thai women in a class-conscious society, working the bars is not only a way to make money, it's a way to meet a nice foreign husband. It often works out that way—most cops know lots of corrupt cops made up of a foreign man and a former bar girl. "Pussy Women" is probably the favorite movie around here," Clark says with a grin.

Thailand's nightlife crackdown is a genuine concern here, but the recent sweeping over the bars has opened holes that the government offensive will fall away. (Like Thailand's success in ending English's Fullerton soccer team. Mind you, it's after Liverpool now.) It's unlikely that Bangkok will ever morph into Vancouver. Take the politicians, for example—Vancouver has plenty, but in Bangkok some have a different view. "It's a pretty miserable city," the man once I spoke to said. "The more I think Bangkok is the land of the film school boys show up, realize there's one to tell them how to behave, and run one on to it."

As for the National Hockey League's search for a new home...



## WHY DON'T PEOPLE VOTE?

There are many ways to bring alienated citizens back to the ballot box

**THE TREND** (lower) voter turnout in the country in the most stable of Canadian democracies. Over the last 16 years, we have witnessed a 14-per cent decline in balloting in federal elections. Moreover, the declining sense among young people that voting is "useful" suggests that this trend will continue.

"To combat increased cynicism about elections, governments and politicians, elected officials are proposing a variety of measures. New Brunswick has launched a commission to investigate replacing their winner-take-all elections with a system of proportional representation. British Columbia has struck a constitutional assembly made up of randomly

selected citizens to analyze electoral reform, with the promise of a binding referendum on their recommendations in 2005. Dallas McGuinty, the Ontario premier, has established a "citizens' panel" to deliberate over major policy questions, and Prime Minister Paul Martin has committed to parliamentary reform in an effort to reduce the "democratic deficit."

These initiatives reflect a growing alarm over voters' "progressive" disengagement, but each one addresses an isolated part of the problem, be it the diminished role of health-care MPs, underrepresentation of smaller parties in legislatures, or the absence of citizen input in government decision-making. That's because the measures needed to combat the democratic deficit are so varied. Voter turnout could be increased by 100 per cent if we implemented compulsory voting, as in the practice of Australia. The role of elected officials could be enhanced by increasing the power of parliamentary committees and confining more free votes, as Martin advocates. Citizens could be re-engaged through regular town halls, and more innovative provisions that encourage citizens in many U.S. states, such as California.

If, if you look below the polite patterns of voter turnout to the underlying structural forces driving the behaviour, the picture is even more depressing. In regions such as the deep and desolate mountains, in isolation, Italy could make the largest problem of citizen alienation, and could even make nations worse. When elections come to the polls, it weakens the foundations of democracy because they are barely being

as the individual has little impact on, or say in, our national affairs; as the welfare of the collective has little bearing on individual well-being; and as individual well-being can flourish (or flourish) and independent of decisions initiated through legislative democracy.

Besides the erosion of our democratic ethos has been more wholesale than more gradual, any effort to reform the system (and to change the role of voting) will require more in civic culture than begins with two guiding principles: Changes must be designed to

**A GREATER** concern than political instability is stability bordering on inertia, where one-party rule can last decades

(a) being removed in close contact with one another and their elected leaders, and (b) providing tangible evidence that the average Canadian has both a say and a stake in the political process.

If Canadian believers their votes are meaningless, and if voters regions feel their voice is not adequately heard through the electoral process, why not consider a system of proportional representation? This would reflect voting results more accurately, and give legislators a better problem face. The more contentious argument against such a system (citizens receive legislative representation proportional to their actual percentage vote) is that it leads to rapid government turnover and political instability. Italy is often cited

as the example to be avoided. But what is the inherent problem with more elections? In all the years I have been polling, I've never found anyone more than the smallest possible age refer to an election as "uninteresting."

A much greater concern than political instability is stability bordering on inertia, where one-party rule can last decades. In fact, Canada's experience of democracy would probably lend itself to consistent handling and legislative in opposition (compared to the ticking and toad adherence to party discipline we would have).

If overnight and immediate change were demanded, we could consider a bicameral system in which the federalist elected along the lines of proportional representation and in given new powers to represent regional interests. This has been demanded by Western Canadian politicians for decades and would make the system more responsive to their needs. Direct input from the ground through an elected Senate might also dilute the logjam of federal-provincial relations, in which provinces rarely speak for the national interest and instead expend all their efforts on pilfering the federal government and demanding more funds.

Instead of simply using citizen questionnaires to gauge public opinion, we could employ technology to facilitate democratic education and interactivity. In the last two decades, we have seen an explosion of technology designed to empower the individual. What have we done in politics? Every five years or so, we go to the polls and elect our representatives to place an "X" on a piece of paper. We could develop time-to-time models for major public policy issues and make them available over the Internet to give citizens more direct input and greater insight into the consequences of the choices they might follow.

And why should we be afraid of more referenda? The tyranny of the majority (so to be found only when the nation is uninformed) has been the bane of the United States, with its decade-long history of regular referenda, and even that system will be better than the



when they learn to live with the ones they have already made.

The one citizen member—everyday citizens are relieved of their regular job to spend a period of time—could be expanded beyond it to focus on electoral reform. Assemblies could serve as a form of focus group for governments, considering the same issues as legislators. Citizens would appear before them to issue their one, connecting politicians to the real world while giving voters a better understanding of government.

We could initiate mandatory civics and social development service, domestically or around the world. In this vein, Paul Martin's recently announced Canada Corps

should be applauded as a step in the right direction. Under such programs, young people could work on environmental clean-ups, or create outdoor centres or in foreign projects. This would not only be great social policy but would also bring Canadians closer together in a common sense of purpose and creed.

Since they are already active, we could integrate the volunteer sector and non-governmental organizations more meaningfully into the political system. On a rotating basis, they could be seated as in on-parliamentary committees, making recommendations to governments. This would give their interests a voice in ministerial decision-making, and force them to mod-

erate their often extreme positions in the "cradle of compromise" that is Parliament. In the same way the town square and the theatre added democracy in ancient Greece, governments need to fund public spaces in which citizens can be brought together to share ideas, art, thoughts, public debates and a sense of community.

These reforms, either alone or together, are not a panacea for the ills that have set into our political system over the last two decades. But they at least engage citizens and start a dialogue about what kind of society we want.

Alan R. Critch is a professor of the Toronto-based consulting firm The Strategic Counsel.







## IT SHAKES A VILLAGE

A stranger brings trouble to town in three fish-out-of-water fables

**ONE AND THREE** new movies set in far-flung Quebec's remote island in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, a gambling town on the Mississippi and an American hamlet concerned on a lone voyage in Denmark. It's hard to imagine three more different films than *Seducing Dr. Lewis*, *The Ladykillers* and *Doyle*—respectively, a chopstick Quebec comedy, a witty genre American fable and a stark Scandinavian drama. But all three are fables about a stranger who lands in a sleepy town from another world, a cultural outsider who's taken in by

simple folk and is divided from them by a big fat secret.

**Seducing Dr. Lewis** (already one of the worst-reviewed Canadian movies of the year, even before opening in English Canada. At Le Grande Aubert, it has grossed \$6.7 million in Quebec and reeled up 10 Quebec nominations. The story takes place in a tiny village that's living off welfare after the decline of the fishery. A company offers to build a factory on the island, but only if the village has a resident doctor. A village doctor (Raymond Rouleau), employs a nurse to lure a young Montreal physician named Lewis (David Beron) to take the job. Dr. Lewis is an ancient crooked liar, so all the villagers have to pretend they're mad about crooked, mythical leprosy. The genre of French Canadian movies building a crooked pitch on the human fables of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, then trying to master the game, is truly inspired.

In his feature directing debut, TV commercial screenwriter Jean-François Poulin leads us up near the fishery drama. And the village house formula is familiar from the film *Waking Ned Devine*, set in an Irish hamlet that this is a comedy with real heart, grounded by superb acting and the authenticity of an rugged location. *Seducing Dr. Lewis*, one of the most accessible crowd-pleasers to come out of Canada, could make anyone.

In *The Ladykillers*, the misfit works the other way around: the stranger in town is the perpetrator, not the target, of the law. Loosely based on the 1955 movie with Alec Guinness, the latest noir line confuses Brian Jull and Ethan Coen (Jull, *O Brother Where Art Thou?*) is a fine-tuned heist movie with absurd streaks of farcical G. H. Don (Tom Hanks), a charlatan doctor

who comes to town a Montrealer taken from a kindly old black woman (Ima P. Hall). Mesmerized by a quiet listening to jazz music, Don's shady bag of tricks sees her not only to travel into the town by canoe. Don is a river con man, South-embodied assassin and director of a band of delinquent trash talking junkies (Marlon Wayans) as an explosives expert with a terrible bowel syndrome (J. K. Simmons).

Hanks goes to Louisiana in a Dixie accent, a dirty manner and voice of volatile dialogue. His character is a con man version of the crooked boss played by George Clooney in *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* Between the dancing scene and the high-gloss soundtrack, there's plenty to appreciate. But *The Ladykillers* is too clever by half. Ironically, the Coen brothers make it into a satirical

ing themselves from the suburban. And while they deliver some laughs, it feels like a con man in showing off everything but heart.

**Doyle** is in a class of its own. There's never been anything like this weirdly surreal epic (from Donatien's *Les Van Van* [Dancer in the Dark]). Inverting the golden rule of his own Dapone musicals, Van Thuyssen an Our Three psychopaths in a Rocky Mountain mining community that consists of white outlaws on an empty stage—music, doom and clouds are all projected on the floor. But within this panoramic world, some terrific scenes give performers of screaming violence—including Nicole Kidman, Paul Bettany, Thomas Haden Church, Ben Gazzara, Kevin Spacey and Chloë Sevigny. Kidman, who's never been better, plays a mysterious stranger first from gangsters. And she isn't hospitalizing this is horror, the become another of her. This is a horror, but with a twist. And she isn't hospitalizing this is horror, the become another of her. This is a horror, but with a twist. And she isn't hospitalizing this is horror, the become another of her. This is a horror, but with a twist.



*Seducing Dr. Lewis*, with Rouleau (LPH) and Lewis (Lewis), is a comedy with real heart.

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Her new album, *All of One Heart*, has a few uptempo songs but is mostly serious and intimate

**SARAH HARMER**, Sara Roberts and Ron Scoveth walk into a Starbucks ... and, well, nobody notices. While that would be unlikely in the coffee shops of Canada, it happened in Austin, Tex., just two weeks ago. Harmer and Scoveth were there to play an afternoon gig on the café's patio for the middle-aged, Birkenstock-wearing set—while the notoriously hard-partying Roberts dragged himself out of bed just to watch. When Harmer was about three songs in, the crowd began to understand that maybe they were in the presence of Canadian greatness. One fellow even nudged his buddy, saying, "See, I told

you there were some good things happening in Canada, it's not all Cowboy Junkies." After Harmer's set, a very sore of himself received some owner grace: the red-headed beauty hit card and told her, in a somewhat patronizing manner, to e-mail him when she comes through Wisconsin. Considering Harmer's 2000 solo debut album, *You Were Here*, had had fly sales in the U.S., she doesn't exactly need that kind of grassroots support. She was gracious nonetheless. That afternoon the 33-year-old singer proved irresistible—her pretty songs, impressive musicianship and striking good looks wear down well with the non-fat way ladies.

But you could never dismiss Harmer as just a coffee crowd pleaser: The night before, she had completely transfixed a packed rock audience, playing songs from her new disc, *All of One Heart*, at Austin's South by Southwest music festival. She's got an edge, an indie cred that distinguishes her from Sarah McLachlan and all those other women who don't rock feudal on *Wision O' Songs*

"I'm a good girl," says Harmer. "But behind the kit, yeah, I can let it go."

**LOOKING SAUCY** as a sheer black top, black bra and Indian jenni, Harmer steps off the Starbucks patio and into a cozy bar down the street. Patronized by legionnaires and honest-to-goodness Wisconsin locals, the establishment is actually called The Hole in the Wall—and it's almost too scary to stay. But finding a quiet spot in a back room next to jukebox machines and pool tables, Harmer—along with her friend Jake MacDonald, who plays keyboards in the band—settles in with a Rolling Rock beer, completely at ease.

The last time Harmer was at this festival was in 2001, just in *You Were Here* was catching on in the U.S. That album, inspired by the kind of formative mainstream someone has in her late teens and early 20s, spawned the hits *Basement Apartment* and *Don't Get Your Back Up*, and introduced her as a singing/songwriting force. After performing occasionally for more than two years, Harmer relocated to her farmhouse in Elginburg,

## SARAH'S EDGE

In Austin, Tex., SHANDA DEZIEL finds, Sarah Harmer is irresistible

CD compilations. Heavily influenced by the musical tastes of her five older siblings, Harmer developed an early interest in the Tragically Hip. When she was in high school, living outside of Burlington, Ont., with her former father, Clem, and teacher mother, Isabelle, Harmer joined the Toronto roots-rock band the Saddletramps. Then she moved to Kingston to attend Queen's University and formed the rock outfit Weeping Tile and played drums in the Wads, a fun punk side project. "I couldn't sing punk,

Orr, a taste of Kingston, and took her sweet new getting back to work. "I was doing a lot of stuff I like doing, outdoor stuff," she says. "And then I did start to feel like, 'C'mon Sarah, you can garden when you're 99.' I felt a lot of guilt when I saw my contemporaries out there doing stuff and contributing to the creative environment."

Eventually, she got down to it. Harmer and her boyfriend of two years, Martin Kraak—who lives in Toronto and does sound for the acts Broken Social Scene and Heyday—



# RIDING HIGH IN TEXAS

Canadians at South by Southwest generated a whole lot of buzz

**THE SOUTH** by Southwest music festival poses a nearly impossible task: for more than 1,000 acts, 58 venues, four nights. Think besides Little Richard was there to mention in survey. The 71-year-old keynote speaker launched the 19th annual event (March 17-21) of the pre-eminence Austin, Tex., indie music scene with some sage words of advice: "Be chic, nothin' less" and "Skip your own clichés." The whole shindig wound up more than 80 hours later with blurry eyes, ringing ears, bellies full of BBQ and the sounds of Los Lobos. N.E.D., Altamont and many more adding to the South Sound, the heart of Austin's club district. In between there were plenty of Ones to Watch, Next Big Things, It Bands and Rock Gods. And, as has been the case for a few years now, the Canadian presence rivaled all other non-U.S. countries for buzz, consistency and credibility.

One of the Austin city papers ran an opening spread article that asked, "Come this, why do all your bands sound like us?" After Broken Social Scene, the New Pornographers or White Horse? "They couldn't have been more wrong. The Canuck contingent staged from the sensitive sensings of Ron Sexsmith to the psychobabble rock of Sam Bobins, the raucous folk of the Winkey Jemmy to the polished pop of Andy Strachan, the screaming adolescent panic of Nine Mice to the new wave romanticism of the Still, the poetry of old country-folk-folk country phenoms Buck 65 to the some dance dance of the 11 together music collective Broken Social Scene. And that's not even



Broken Social Scene started out a big draw, but the Hives (above) worked the crowd into a stupor

a third of the Canadian acts on the bill.

Many of those artists moved on to other acts' shows. South Sound could be seen from across the venue as Broken Social Scene, Metric and Jon Roberts as well as joining Toronto's John Collins on stage for a duet. All of the above—plus members of the Still, and Of Sissies and her band—returned the favour, showing up for one or more of Harbour's three performances. But just being on the Canadian scene wasn't enough to get you into the packed Broken Social Scene concert on Friday night, now that most attendees were south of the border have discovered that

Toronto supergroup. The large outdoor venue was quickly filled to capacity, leaving hundreds of people on the street trying to catch their people in. For those who managed out, an add-on added-up when the show was sold out from over the top of the Austin Globe: it's the best day of "only starting on every level, so much more than anybody could have asked for."

Broken Social Scene is the brainchild of Kevin Drew and Brendan Cannon, but now joined by their friends, who came from Canadian bands Metric, Sex, and Mike Sympathy and Raising the Pinks and also include wife-writer Collins and indie folk-folkies they once were in the first time and drew a modest, mostly indie, crowd. The band sound a U.S. sign, dis-

publican and a European label all from some 40-minute set as a bar call Metric's—a copy-paste bar-type place where you'd expect to see Pearl Jam cover bands," says Drew. Since then, Broken Social Scene has won a few for best alternative album, had a U.S. breakthrough with their CD *The Forget It in Forget*, and been featured in nearly every music publication. As an afternoon show at this year's SXSW festival, initial Broken Social Scene fans revealed out industry types to show their love—clapping long and hard after each song as if every single note was their absolute favourite. Immediately after the gig, Drew described it as having the vibe of a birthday party.

But moments later the party was over. Standing outside the scene, Drew couldn't find his drummer's cymbals, and the rain

**THERE** were plenty of Ones to Watch, Next Big Things, It Bands and Rock Gods—and some adoring audiences for Canuck acts

of the group's instruments and equipment were shown haphazardly on the sidewalk. "My whole band's gone and I can't lift anything because I have a groin injury," he said, losing his cool and cutting the interview short when he could get things organized. The downside of being in a collective is that once your gig is over, everyone has to rush off and as up with their other band.

The Stars, for example, played one hour before Broken Social Scene, then joined their onstage to provide vocals and a whole section. Then the Stars left quickly for their 7 p.m. show at a private party, and still had another gig at 1 a.m. This Toronto/Winnipeg quartet sped up and emerged its last two songs and played impressive, uncharacteristically high-voltage shows in Austin—every one of which was packed. "Last year at SXSW we were supposed to open for the 32nd," said lead singer Torquil Campbell, "but at the last minute one of the band's family members died. So we ended up opening for a lesbian punk band who were like, 'perish.' The audience wasn't, not surprisingly, was way better this year."

The Stars' friends, Metric, who had from Toronto and Texas and are based in L.A.,

pulled in a bigger, more energized crowd in Austin than they do in Canada—regret with one of those long queues of people trying unsuccessfully to get in. The poppy, now some-traditionalist's power lead singer, Emily Haines, used her powerhouse voice and sexy attitude to work the crowd into a frenzy. She sang, raved, smashed her keyboards and sang a rousing battle cry: "Radio static, but it's going to change / MTV static, but it's going to change / CMJ static, but it's going to change." The rest of the lyrics were unintelligible, but I have a feeling the doesn't think the U.S. newsworld really going to change. (By the way, Austin is a liberal town in the state of Texas—no lefty Canadian activists are both welcome and welcomed.)

Once Metric exited the stage the crowd dwindled, even though Sam Roberts was next. The Moosewax is still all but unknown in this part. But the American who did seek around once his blood and guts discovered what Canada already knows: "Oh my God," was heard from both male and female audience members. "He's a rock star."

The U.S. has also been slow to catch on to Robby, otherwise known as rapper Buck 65. The Mt. Vernon, N.S., native has long had a cult following in Canada, and in recently, he says sheepishly, "very big in France"—which just happens to have been his adopted home for the past two years. While in Austin, attempting to break into the U.S. market once again, Robby ended up with what he calls "the worst time slot of the weekend, no-one was about it." His storm on the festival's third night coincided with some massive acts, including Soundgarden's N.E.D., set to involve an all-Canadian lineup at Merch that would have kept any many of his compatriots. Yet the music was following in it. "Thursday I went to the big outdoor show that was on the river, with Kris Kristofferson, Texas and the Maytals and [various local acts] Joni Seale. I ended up onstage, standing next to Kris Kristofferson, watching Texas—who would come over and do that thing where you put your fist together with me. And then I gave Joni Seale a pig tail before he went on because she had never played in front of that many people before." With that, Robby's festival was made. And there's good news: anyone who discovered Buck 65, Sam Bobins, Broken Social Scene and/or any of their friends were home happy as well. ☐

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## CLOSING NOTES



1960



1993



1996



2000

**Music** | Where's Billy Crystal when we need him?

Alma Mater will join the ranks of a rare college delivery as hosts the *Great American* on April 5 in Edmonton. In fact, announcing the list of previous hosts makes one quite sure a Canadian Billy Crystal—or at least a Whoopi Goldberg—What we have had is Burton Cummings—and lots of him: The Glee Who singer pulled outstoppers through Canada's biggest night of music four times: 1973, 1980, 1982 and then again in 1983 with Alan Thicke. Comedian Howie Mandel ruled the stage once in the '80s and Paul Shulter said his piece in 1993.



Marissella Cabryl takes over the reins this year; past hosts include Cummings, Colson, Dean, Murray and the McFlatts.

Of course, there have also been a few success stories. The cast of *This Hour* has 22 albums; it was a crowd-pleaser in 1995, as was Rick Mercer when he did the gig solo in 2001. A year later, the *Moretalked Ladies* got big laughs with some Jaco-infused silly songs. But for the most part it's been a pretty sound collection of Canadian celebrities. And now *Alanis*—isn't it ironic?

JOHN BROWN

## Books | Bidini hits one out of the park

### Massenwilderbeute (Nachtigallensittich & Co. & Co.)

Devo filled his parents' lives and sometimes made a point of his summer with the Notunes Primes—a minor-league baseball club. The torpede-based guitarist with the blue-collared proved as hard-fought of home with his wife and two young children to document the musical and social-fueled in their players. His quest was as much a search for his cultural heritage as an ode to the game.

## LISTINGS

Wages on the Rise  
April 5, 2011

Sixty-five trade-pact gains will invigorate the Canadian lifestyle and other parts of the country while fostering live performances by roots musicians, including **Fred Eaglesworth, Nathan and Washboard Hank**. [www.canadianlifestyle.com](http://www.canadianlifestyle.com)  
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This annual event coincides with the stopover of the Pacific Black Brant geese on their journey from Mexico to Alaska. Check out the huge flocks on the beach and/or join in the wood carving competition. [www.2ndstreetfestival.de.ca](http://www.2ndstreetfestival.de.ca)  
Qualicum Beach and Parksville, B.C.

Blue Mountains  
Mountain International  
Ski Area Festival  
Dec. 11-12, 13, 14

The annual gathering of editors, reviewers, journalists and publishers is drawing big names in 2004 including Paul McCartney, Vice president Douglas Cramer and Booker Prize-winner Kazuo Ishiguro.

**ROGERS**





## WHERE'S THE AGENDA?

We have a new national bird in Ottawa: a chicken come home to roost

"IF YOU HAVE 40 priorities, you don't have any priorities," Paul Martin told the crowd at a Liberal party fundraiser last December, three days before he became prime minister. "We cannot go off in every direction at the same time. We have to establish our priorities." That is taking longer than you might have thought.

More than a year ago, "latterly hundreds of advisers and experts" set to work coming up with bold new ideas about how Martin would govern Canada, Susan Delacour wrote in her book *Juggernaut*. The city was sequestered in clearing houses for

policy ideas. Maybe that year-long process was a dud. Certainly it all led to an impasse at November's Liberal convention ("It is a time when destiny seems to hold"), followed the next day by the release of a paragraph whose contents went precisely as rumormongers as an aide. "The Politics of Achievements."

Actually, I just divided. That was the subtitle. The title was "Making History." Perhaps this was meant to be ironic.

Indeed. Shortly before the November convention, the Prime Minister received briefing books from the top bureaucrats in every department of the government. Those books helped the Martinverse prepare its speech from the Throne, which is supposed to be a new government's declaration of its priorities. It is too easy to remember what was in that speech from the Throne: No number.

Indeed. In February, Martin instructed every department in government to deliver a 10-page "vision memo" full of new ideas for government. The desired emphasis, I'm told, was on "thinking outside the box." It's unusual for a prime minister to tap his bureaucrats for vision three months after he picks the job. Usually he brings his own supply. Usually vision doesn't run away so fast.

Not even Ralph Goodale's budget, "New Agenda for Achievement." The new agenda is sadly notable for the old agenda: there are charts entitled "Renewal in Core and Health Spending," "Renew Government Measures Aimed at Improving the



Lives of Aboriginal People and Their Communities," and "Renew Investment in the Environment by the Government of Canada (1997-2000)."

Improbable as their ideas about the future, Martin's disavowal of the past is refreshing. The anonymous aides who tell us what to think about Martin have spent months advertising the coming election as a chance to choose a firm Martin government, not a fourth Liberal government.

Apparently, Liberals with too close an association to the Chrétien years have had tough do/don't. Chrétien's resignation has their jobs. Liberals considered too close to the Chrétien regime have had a hard time getting reappointed as embassies. Some Liberal MPs wonder why their boss wants to trust three conservative minority governments as a penance. Martin has been getting as careful as chickens and, I am told, even in cabinet, about his adversarial relationship

with the past decade.

"It's strange," one member of the Liberal caucus told me. "He listens. But I'm not sure he hears."

The urge to blame Chrétien for all the ills in the world is overwhelming, even when the playback is nearly instantaneous. Last Tuesday's budget flew down a series "national unity reserves," worth several million dollars a year. Officials told the *Globe and Mail* it was such a terrible secret, not directly by Chrétien, that Martin was never even told the fund's name. Two days later, Martin knew all about it and wondered what the fuss was. "That's a working secret," he told the *House of Commons*. "All of these matters are expressed in the public account."

The day after announced that Liberal I refused to "They couldn't resist the temptation to take a shot at Chrétien. And now they're paying for it. Liberals don't usually feel superior to go out there and win one for the Gipper."

For a while there, some around Martin were starting to worry that the scandal that news would force them to postpone an election and govern. The prospect was terrifying. "It is clear that prolonging the House session will lead to more debates on bills," Dennis Dawson, Martin's man at Quebec City, told *Le Devoir*. "The delay, delay, delay, at some point we'll have to find things to debate."

Shoulders.

Paul Martin has wanted to be prime minister for so long he never got around to deciding what he wanted to do. Wiped between a past held rather dear and a future whose contours still aren't his hand-picked advisers, Martin will soon seek refuge in the arms of the electorate. After an election he can make yet another blue ribbon panel to think outside the box. Finally, one day, he will realize he's in the box. Under Paul Martin, Canada has a new national bird: the chicken coming home to roost.

To comment: [hedegp@rockpage.com](mailto:hedegp@rockpage.com) or find Paul Wells's column "Rock Page" at [www.rockpage.com/pwells](http://www.rockpage.com/pwells)

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